Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

.9
w 3Hh

# HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Wednesday, December 6, 1944

SUBJECT: "Will It Shrink?"

Information from home economists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture

Are you giving Mother a new dress for Christmas? Well, whether you choose one that's tailored and practical or fetching and feminine, make sure you check one thing. Will it shrink? You know there isn't much you can do about a dress after it shrinks. An ounce of shrink prevention is certainly worth a pound of cure.

We'll get back to Mother's Christmas dress in a minute. Let's talk for a few minutes about shrinkage. We've all had experience with garments that have shrunk. Our grandmothers worried with the same problem. In fact, the problem goes back to primitive days when the first women carried their clothes down to the river to wash them. And shrinkage has continued to annoy homemakers right down through the ages.

You'd think we'd have the problem licked by now. We have made progress. Many fabrics on the market today are specially treated or pre-shrunk. And in these fabrics, the shrinkage is hardly noticable after washing. But as you know from your own experience, all fabrics are not pre-shrunk. A lot of them shrink when you wash them.

Just how much do fabrics shrink? Do they shrink after each washing? Can they be stretched back to their original size and shape by ironing?

Two women textile scientists recently made a study to find the answers to these questions. They carried on their study at Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station.

Here's what they did. First, they collected 25 samples of yard goods. They chose the kinds of materials you buy when you're shopping for yourself and your children....cotton...linens...and rayons. None of these materials had been pre-shrunk or specially treated. Of course, the samples included different kinds of

cottons and linens and rayons.

They washed these samples of material not once but five times. They used a rotary type electric washing machine. The soap solution was mild. And they used distilled water, not only for washing but also for rinsing. It's a soft water, you know. There's no metals or chemicals in distilled water. And any shrinkage that took place in the samples was due to the wetting and not to some chemical that might be in the water.

After they washed the samples, the textile scientists rolled them in towels for 15 minutes. Then they pressed the samples with a moderately hot iron.

For this experiment, they used a special ironing apparatus. It was possible for them to set this ironing apparatus at different tensions. That is, they could have as much as a four pound tension or they could use none. From this, they were able to tell whether the tension put on the iron made any difference in restoring the sample to its original size.

Well, washing each of 25 samples five times and pressing them at different tensions is no small job. Added to this were the jobs of taking the measurements and keeping the records. But the experiment resulted in some worthwhile findings.

Here are some points of interest to you as a shopper.

First, the experiment showed that the greatest shrinkage takes place in the first washing. It's true there was some shrinkage in later washings for some of the samples. But for most of the yard goods tested, the greatest shrinkage takes place in the first washing. This means that when you pre-shrink material, you can be almost sure that it won't shrink more when it's made up.

Something else. The biggest shrinkage comes lengthwise of the material. That's true for cotton, linen and rayon. So when you buy material and plan to pre-shrink it, you can allow for shrinkage in the length of the material. There isn't much shrinkage crosswise of the material.

You'll be interested to know that some types of rayon shrink more than others. In this experiment, the samples of spun rayon showed greater shrinkage than the samples of cotton and linen materials.. The samples of continuous filament rayon - flat crepe and sharkskin materials - showed the least shrinkage of all.

Another thing - by gently stretching when you iron them, it's possible to bring continuous filament rayon materials back to their original size and shape. In spun rayons, stretching and pulling will reduce the shrinkage some but not entirely.

And now to get back to Mother's Christmas house dress. Do buy one that's pre-shrunk or specially treated so that it won't shrink. The label will tell you. Or if you're making the dress, do pre-shrink it before you make it. Your Mother's enjoyment of that dress will depend on how well it fits her after the first washing. So before you give it to her, be sure and ask, "Will it shrink?"

#

LIBRARY
CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS
NOV 27 1944
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE